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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000516

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV JUS BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN JUSTICE MINISTER ON PRIORITIES, TRABELSI EXTRADITION, GUANTANAMO ETAINNEES AND ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION

Classified By: CDA Wayne Bush, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Justice Minister Stefaan De Clerck, reprising his role as Justice Minister from an earlier government, told the Charge d'affaires on March 2, 2009 that his top priorities in his new post were to improve the efficiency of the judicial system in executing sanctions against criminals; modernizing the judicial system's computer networks, which actually broke down two years ago; and reorganizing the judicial system itself. Looking ahead to Belgium's turn as EU President in the second half of 2010, De Clerck said he expected his government to pursue similar goals on the judicial side during its Presidency.

¶2. (C) With reference to the extradition of convicted terrorist Nizar Trabelsi, the Minister said that the request was going through the first steps of a procedure in which he, in consultation with the Cabinet, would have the final decision. The Minister said that Trabelsi had filed his first appeal on 19 February but that it had been rejected. If Trabelsi were to ask for asylum, Trabelsi could make things very complicated for the U.S. In the meantime, the Minister expects Trabelsi's extradition case to be reviewed by the Court of Cassation by the summer of this year.

¶3. (C) When asked about Belgium taking Guantanamo detainees, De Clerck wondered aloud why Belgium had to find a solution for the U.S. When the Charge replied that the U.S. would already be dealing with the hardest detainee cases, the Minister replied that his concern was that any detainees accepted would be released into Belgian society. De Clerck said that the Home Affairs Ministry had discussed the issue of detainees the week previously. Belgium will await the report of an EU delegation traveling to Washington in March. De Klerck believes that it is important to balance American responsibility for the detainees with the need to ensure that the facility be closed, implying that Belgium would consider taking a few.

¶4. (C) On Islamic radicalization, De Klerck said that it was a Europe-wide problem. There was more risk of problems in Antwerp, although the overall risk had gone down. In general, radicalization was not as much of an issue in Belgium as in some neighboring countries. De Klerck continues to hope that further integration will bring further Europeanization in the communities in question.

BUSH

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